

AN OLD PLOT.

But in This Case a New Heroine Was Worked In.

Young story-writers are apt to begin a literary career by telling, in some form or other, the story which follows. But it must have taken a real genius to make a cow the heroine. This particular story is attributed by the Philadelphia Times, in which we find it, to a Texas locomotive engineer.

The engineer was running his train at full speed, when, he says, his attention was attracted by a cow which seemed to be coming straight-down the track to meet the train. He put his hand on the valve and puffed out three sharp whistles.

Still the cow came on, bellowing at every step, and acting altogether in an unusual manner. As much from curiosity as anything else, the engineer slowed up and sent the fireman ahead to see what was the matter with the cow.

No sooner did the cow see that the speed of the train was slackening, and that the fireman was going to investigate, than she turned and ran straight back down the track, stopping now and then, looking over her shoulder and switching her tail as much as to say: "Come on!"

The man followed, and by and by saw the cow stop short at a high trestle. Going up, he discovered another cow which had got herself fastened in the trestlework squarely across the rail.

As soon as the animal was released, the two cows lost no time in scampering away.

CARPETS WERE UNKNOWN.

How the Fourteenth Century Mansions Were Furnished.

Carpets in the fourteenth century were unknown luxuries, says Good Words, but the fashion of strewing the apartments with rushes was being gradually abandoned. Rushes were still used in the retainers' hall, but for the better rooms sweet-scented herbs and fragrant twigs were usually employed.

In the fourteenth century windows were apertures filled with glass so as to admit light, but to exclude wind. The walls also were frequently hung with cloth or tapestry to protect the inmates of the room from the many currents of air that penetrated the strong but badly built walls. We learn from various ancient documents that it was the duty of the serving men and pages to sweep out the principal apartments, but as the use of water is rarely mentioned, damp and fragrant leaves and twigs must have aided not only in collecting the dust, but also toward refreshing the atmosphere in such constantly closed rooms, fresh air being only admitted through the doors opening on to the battlements or balconies.

From old inventories at Thurlough and elsewhere we ascertain how scantily furnished were these ancient mansions, although they seem to have been abundantly supplied with flagons and drinking cups in gold, silver and finely engraved pewter, besides an infinite number of black jacks or cups made of leather.

THE FORMIDABLE UMBRELLA.

A French Tragedian Finds It Mightier Than the Sword.

The affection of the collector for the objects of his zeal has been amusingly illustrated by a story told of Melingue, a French tragedian who had a mania for gathering together great quantities of old vestments, arms and similar antique apparatus. Among his treasures was a beautiful and keen-edged sword which had belonged to Philip II, son of Emperor Charles V.

Having worn this sword in a piece in which he was performing, Melingue was making his way homeward in Paris one night. The weather was rainy, and he carried an umbrella. Under his cloak he bore the precious sword of Philip II.

Coming around a corner, Melingue was suddenly menaced by two sneak thieves. He was an expert fencer, and knew that with the sword he could quickly beat the rascals off. But he said to himself:

"What! Betray to these rascals that I have such a precious possession? No! They might be too much for me, after all, and then they would get it. I will keep it out of sight."

So saying, he placed his left hand on the hilt of the sword inside his cloak, and with the other hand let down his umbrella. With this as a weapon, he assaulted the footpads with such force and spirit that he put them to flight.

In this case the umbrella turned out to be mightier than the sword.

Something of a Change.

A French paper vouches for this dialogue, which took place in a French assize court, as being literally true:

"Why," asked the judge of a man who had been caught stealing provisions, "did you attempt to rob this poor baker?"

"It was hunger that forced me to it," answered the man. "When the forest wolf is hunted from the woods by starvation, he takes his prey where he can seize it."

"Hush!" thundered the court, rapping on the desk. "He does nothing of the sort. He endures his ills, repents, and becomes an honest man!"

Ideas of Savages and Children.

The Cheyennes and other Indians of the plains believe that thunder is caused by the flapping of the wings of an im-



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mense bird which flies across the sky, bringing the storm. All the ideas of savage tribes are based on such simple conceptions of nature. The ideas of young children are often identical with savage myths, as a result of minds on the same plane of development attempting to explain the same thing.

Samoans Are Lazy.

Civilization has demoralized the Samoans. They have taken a fancy for the large men-of-war's boats, for which they have discarded their canoes, and in which they row about from village to village, discussing politics and neglecting their crops. To build the boats they have mortgaged their land, and instead of making an attempt to raise money to pay their creditors they spend their time playing cricket for stakes consisting of pigs or kegs of salt beef.

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